

Wellington Hills County Park History and Update

The Snohomish County Executive and County Council signed the Brightwater Mitigation Agreement on October 17th, 2005, starting the process of acquisitions, public outreach, Master Planning, design, engineering and construction of the identified Brightwater Mitigation Agreement Projects. One of the more significant acquisition and development projects identified in *Exhibit B To The Settlement Agreement* is the ***“Maltby Area Park – Approx. 40 acres within 4 miles of the treatment plant ... primarily active recreation facilities for the broad community surrounding the treatment plant.”*** The Park and Recreation Department and Public Works Department have been implementing the Agreement since that time completing numerous acquisition and development projects.

Between 2006 and 2011 County Parks Department staff researched, conducted site visits and performed due diligence on more than 20 potential property sites for the “40 acre Maltby Area active use” park. The Department, with County Executive and Council approval, submitted acquisition offers on 5 different parcels and in the Fall of 2011 negotiated a purchase and sale agreement with the University of Washington for the Wellington Hills site. The County closed on the property February 29th, 2012.

The County embarked on an extensive public outreach process in April 2012 to develop the Wellington Hills County Park Master Plan. This included 13 Ad Hoc Committee meetings (the committee included neighbors, stakeholders, community organizations, Northshore School District representatives and City of Woodinville staff). Four (4) community/public meetings conducted at the Brightwater Environmental Learning Center. Six (6) neighborhood meetings at 4 homes and the community club building at Wellington Hills. In addition, members of the public were encouraged to attend Snohomish County Park Advisory Board meetings, County Council meetings and engage in direct conversations with staff, the County Executive and County Council members. Individual citizens, stakeholders and community organizations have attended numerous meetings with the Park Advisory Board, the Council, the Executive and City of Woodinville Council and provided verbal and written comments “on the record”.

Over the course of the past 6 months the staff, consultant team and Ad Hoc committee listened to the public and continually incorporated suggestions into the draft Master Plan. The plan reflects what’s most important to the community:

- ✓ maintain appropriate site buffers between the park and neighbors
- ✓ preserve view corridors and the significant fairway trees and large tree stands
- ✓ improve water quality by addressing run-off, daylighting vintage creek and enhancing wetlands
- ✓ work to keep 75% of the site in natural areas/green spaces
- ✓ improve road infrastructure, address current traffic issues, employ traffic calming and provide pedestrian access
- ✓ provide 4 synthetic turf lighted multi-use fields and 4 grass multi-use fields
- ✓ provide miles of paved and soft surface trails, an outdoor mountain biking skills park, picnic shelters, playgrounds and off-leash area
- ✓ provide more than adequate on-site parking to prevent “spill-over” parking in the neighborhood
- ✓ Include community indoor/sports training space and an Indoor Mountain Biking Park to compliment the outdoor mountain biking area (*most likely not being built in phase I construction*)

Important Facts:

1. **Traffic, roadway and pedestrian improvements will be made prior to or concurrent with opening the park.**
2. **Necessary environmental review, studies, appropriate mitigation will be completed and we anticipate better water quality, control of run-off and lessened impact to Vintage creek and thus Little Bear Creek.**
3. **Approximately 75% of the site will remain in natural/open space or green spaces – existing forestation, meadows, lawns, soft surface trails, off-leash area, planted/landscaping, etc.**
4. **Wellington Hills County Park will have a positive economic impact on nearby residential values as well as for the Cities of Woodinville, Bothell and the Maltby area.**
5. **A privately operated “pay to play” space will be transformed into an amazing publicly owned park space with trails, playgrounds, natural areas, sports fields, off-leash area and outdoor mountain biking skills park that will be open 365 days a year for generations to come.**

During the Master Planning process for Wellington Hills County Park the Parks’ Department staff, consultant team, County Executive’s Office, County Council Offices and various other County Department staff have attended the numerous public meetings, neighborhood meetings, Ad Hoc Committee meetings, stakeholder meetings and individual meetings in an effort to engage, inform and consistently report back to the public. The planning process has been extremely open and inclusive with meeting minutes, plan review documents and draft plan drawing updates available for review and comment in person and via the Parks Department and Public Works Department websites. Some of the key concerns and topics of discussion at various meetings and those submitted through written correspondence are addressed in the following paragraphs. Snohomish County elected leaders and staff is committed to continuing an open and productive dialog. We truly appreciate the time, energy and input shared by our citizens in creating an amazing new public park.

Key questions and concerns raised during the Master Planning process have included:

1. What kind of environmental review needs to be completed? – As with any development the County will submit a State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) checklist. This addresses the environmental concerns including wetland delineation and water quality; geotechnical and soils studies; traffic study; noise study; light pollution study; etc. that determine the extent of potential development and the necessary mitigation for impacts. The SEPA checklist and all studies will be completed prior to adoption of the Master Plan by the County Council. The necessary studies are underway.

The County will complete the SEPA checklist prior to County Council adoption of the Wellington Hills County Park Master Plan.

2. How can we slow down vehicles, improve traffic and provide better pedestrian access? - Traffic use/flow/counts etc. are being addressed through the SEPA process. Prior to acquisition of the property, February 2012, the Parks Department and Public Works Department agreed that between \$1.5 and \$2 million in project funding would need to be dedicated to addressing current traffic issues as well as new impacts created by the park development. We listened to the community/neighbors throughout the public process and expanded the scope of traffic and pedestrian improvements to include:

- A. Widening 240th to two (2) 14' wide lanes from Sno - Wood Road up the hill to the proposed roundabout.
- B. Improvements at the intersection (light/lanes) of 240th and Sno - Wood Road.
- C. 5' separated pedestrian walk way the entire length of 240th from Sno – Wood Road to 75th.
- D. Traffic calming the length of 240th including the roundabout, a speed hump between the roundabout and 71st, table top traffic calming at the intersection of 71st, 2 additional traffic speed humps evenly spaced between 71st and 75th.
- E. Parks ordered and is having Public Works install *No Park Access* signs at the entrance to 71st to limit traffic into the neighborhood and will place curbing elements along 71st to make parking impractical.
- F. Provide a 5 - 8' paved pedestrian walkway/access from 75th at the SE corner of the park through a new private road easement – thus residents coming from South of the park in Woodinville can walk along the 8' shoulder in King County along 75th to this new pedestrian access point.
- G. Parks and Public Works are negotiating the installation of solar powered “lighted speed identification” signage on both 240th and 75th.
- H. The park will have gated access and parking areas. The park will be closed to vehicles after normal hours of operation.

All of the traffic and pedestrian improvements are planned to be completed prior to or concurrent with the park opening.

3. What's the current timeline? – As noted the County acquired Wellington Hills on February 29, 2012. The Park Department immediately began the RFQ process to select a consultant team to lead the public process, design, engineering, permitting and eventual construction management of the park. Bruce Dees and Associates, LLC was selected as winning respondent and in April, 2012 began the process of selecting Ad Hoc Committee members and engaging in the public process. The Ad Hoc Committee included four neighborhood representatives, various stakeholder groups, representatives from the Northshore School District and City of Woodinville. In addition, several neighbors attended the meetings in a “non-member” capacity. Thus began an extensive outreach process that has included 13 Ad Hoc Committee meetings (at Willis Tucker Park), 4 Community/Public meetings (at the Brightwater Environmental Learning Center), 6 neighborhood meetings (in neighborhood homes and the Golf course Community Club) and more than a dozen small group conversations between Parks Department, Executive Office, Council Staff and concerned neighbors.

Park's staff and the consultant team created a timeline early in the process that included public input, schematic design, engineering, SEPA checklist and environmental reviews, Parks Advisory Board approval and County Council adoption of the Park Master Plan. We had hoped to have the Master Plan to the County Council for Adoption in September 2012. That timeline has been revised multiple times due to ongoing public input and corresponding changes to the preferred Master Plan design. The consultant team has produced 7 different draft Master Plan designs each reflecting extensive input from the community, stakeholders, neighbors, County Council and Executive staff and City of Woodinville staff. We have listened to all involved and as a result have provided substantial property buffers; retained significant individual trees and tree stands; included more traffic and pedestrian upgrades, traffic calming and signage (both on and off-site); enhanced water quality by controlling run-off and daylighting a previously “piped” creek; preserved view corridors; increased general public amenities; reduced proposed building sizes and provided more than adequate parking so there is no advantage for park patrons to park on neighborhood streets or private drives.

Our current timeline is:

- A. Continue with SEPA checklist development, all environmental review, studies and refining site design.
- B. Present the preferred Master Plan to the Snohomish County Park Advisory Board on Tuesday, November 13, 2:30 pm, Willis Tucker Community Park. (public encouraged to attend)
- C. All interested parties will be notified when SEPA checklist is complete and can review and take action per standard process. (SEPA checklist complete in mid December – January, 2013)
- D. Present the Master Plan for review and potential adoption by the County Council in the first quarter of 2013 per Council meeting schedules/availability.
- E. Go to permit on the project at the earliest opportunity in the Spring of 2013.

4. Will the park hurt our property values or decrease use/revenue collected at the City of Woodinville turf fields? - Neighbors and the City of Woodinville elected officials expressed concerns regarding negative economic impacts to residential property values near the park and potential impacts to rental revenues on the city owned synthetic turf fields. We believe the exact opposite is true and there are numerous studies supporting the park “proximate principal” or simply that “residential properties near parks regularly attain higher property values than similar residential units that are not within the parks vicinity”. Additionally, we believe there will be no reduction and most likely a very modest increase in user fees collected at the City of Woodinville synthetic turf fields.

There is a shortage of quality multi-purpose synthetic turf sports fields in the community. Currently the Northshore Youth Soccer Association alone represents more than 5,000 youth soccer players and rents space at more than twenty (20) different field locations. Their rental use at quality fields like the City of Woodinville’s or Bothell’s North Creek fields will certainly continue at its present rate. In addition, the exponential growth of participation in youth Lacrosse has led to a tremendous field shortage among all sports. Youth Football, Baseball and Softball all also are requesting additional safe, high quality, lighted fields. The potential increase in field use and thus potential increase in field revenues for the Cities of Woodinville and Bothell could come as a result of the 3 or 4 tournaments that might be able to occur through the use of all of the area synthetic turf fields (Wellington, Bothell, Woodinville, Maltby area and local high schools) each year.

We anticipate increased property values for homes near the park and a positive economic impact for the Cities of Woodinville, Bothell and the Maltby area. We will honor our commitment to operate the park with efficient staffing and cost recovery models.

5. Isn’t this “over development” or a “commercial sports complex”? We’d like most of the park to stay natural or green. – A few citizens have expressed concerns regarding the “over development” or “commercial sports complex” that is being built on this 103 acre site. One called the park the “Costco on the hill”. This could not be further from the truth. As stated in numerous public meetings, in neighborhood meetings and on the record at County Council meetings this is a community based park. We expect that the vast majority of daily use of this park will be by local citizens. Local residents will enjoy the walking, biking and running trails; the outdoor mountain biking skills area; playgrounds; off-leash area; open lawn and natural spaces; and the multi-use sports fields on a daily basis.

A truly commercial site like Costco is virtually 100% developed. The 150,000+ square foot Costco building sits on just under 15 acres, has more than 770 parking stalls and the site nearly all impervious surface. By comparison, current plans show approximately 75% of Wellington Hills County Park being natural area, open community

space, grass fields, planted areas, enhanced wetland areas and buffers. Approximately 10% is devoted to synthetic turf multi-use sports fields, with an additional 15% devoted to playgrounds, parking, paved trails, buildings, picnic shelters and road ways. Costco has virtually no development buffers while the Park has a minimum 115' buffer from built recreation assets to an adjacent property boundary. Most buffers to adjacent properties are well over 150'.

As noted in section 4, there is the potential and even the hope that local sports organizations may be able to host some tournaments at this site, in conjunction with other local field spaces. If the local soccer, lacrosse, baseball or football organizations could host a tournament or jamboree each year it would be a great opportunity for local players. As tournaments or jamborees are typically 1 – 4 day events the community recognizes that this could mean 10 – 16 days a year when a larger than local participation base may be attending. Again, as noted in section 4, this could mean a small positive economic impact for Woodinville, Bothell and the Maltby area. Roughly 96% of the time the park will host predominantly local/community use and potentially 4% of the time it could host larger scale events. ***The most important fact is that 100% of the time Wellington Hills County Park will be an amazing public space for the community to enjoy. A place to take a walk, spend time with your four-legged friend, go for a bike ride, and watch a child or grandchild learn a new skill or that place we go to reflect and collect our thoughts.***

Stakeholders and community organizations have proposed two potential building sites that could accommodate sports and community based activities. The most recent plan reflects a reduction in building space. A “community center” of 25,000 – 30,000 square feet with a public/not for profit operations plan and the potential 60,000 square foot indoor Mountain Biking Skills Center, again with a public/not for profit shared operations plan. It's important to note that neither of these buildings is likely to be built in Phase 1 of the park development. It's important to include these potential buildings in the Master Plan and account for the impervious surface even if they are not constructed for many years. Long-term operations agreements with potential non-profit partners would be vetted and approved through County Council action. The Snohomish County Park Department has several very successful long-term agreements with non-profit and for profit partners.

The top priority for the County Executive, County Council, staff and community are the basic park amenities of trails, playgrounds, multi-use sports fields, off-leash area, adequate parking, picnic shelters and great natural spaces creating an amazing public asset.

6. Are there other comparable parks or community sports complexes in the County or State? - Wellington Hills County Park represents a truly rare and wonderful opportunity to build an amazing “active use” park with much needed multi-use sports fields, trails, playgrounds, etc. Wellington is a large site with varied topography and this creates the opportunity to better integrate active elements with natural areas. Snohomish County Parks operates sites such as Lake Stevens Community Park, Martha Lake Airport Community Park, Paine Field Community Park that have 4 – 7 sports fields but these are 40 or less acres in size. Typically these sites are 75% - 90% fully developed.

There are many Community Parks/Sports Complexes in our state that are adjacent to residential areas with lighted, multi-use fields. Most of these have been built on relatively flat, 40 – 80 acre sites and are substantially “developed”. The Dwight Merkel Sports Complex in Spokane is a great example of a park in residential neighborhood – 75 acres, more than 75% developed. It boasts 8 multi-use sports fields, plus 5 dedicated

baseball fields, BMX track, spray pad, playgrounds, walking trails, etc. This is the type of development that many citizens in the “active use” sports community expected to see at Wellington Hills county Park. They were hoping for 8 – 12 soccer/lacrosse fields plus 5 baseball/softball fields, trails, playgrounds, concession areas, parking, off-leash area, indoor spaces, mountain biking area, etc. We’ve consolidated the high use sports fields into only 4 synthetic turf lighted fields with overlay marking to accommodate soccer, lacrosse, football, and baseball. Again, this represents roughly 10% of the site.

Snohomish County Parks and our “active use” stakeholder groups decided early in the process to strive for a more balanced approach in creating a truly amazing community park asset that better integrates the natural and built assets.

7. We have some operational questions and concerns. – In community and neighborhood meetings as well as written correspondence we have heard concerns regarding the hours of operation, types of concessions (food, beverage, and retail), hours allowed for construction work, amplified sound at the various events, etc. We have continually stated that we will work with the community to address these “operational” concerns. We received several specific requests in writing such as “open the park and 10am and close at 9p”. We will plan on opening the park at 7am and closing after the scheduled activities – most likely 10:30pm per current park practices. Another specific request stating “construction of the park should be limited to 9AM – 6PM”. We would anticipate construction hours of 7am – 5pm but would certainly consider adjustments, particularly on weekends. A specific request of “No Lighted Fields. No electronic sound and no noise amplifying devices in the park.” We are planning on 4 lighted fields but will certainly work with the community and County Council to consider restricting certain types of noise, amplification systems and hours of use.

Snohomish County Parks is committed to working with neighbors, stakeholders and the community in addressing operational concerns.

8. We’ll have to “pay to play” – The Wellington Hills property has been a “pay to play” site for the past 82 years. It was operated as a golf course and the basic premise was you paid a fee for access to the course to play a round of golf. Insurance requirements, risk management and maintenance concerns prevent most golf courses from allowing “general uses” such as walking your dog, playing Frisbee, playing catch, jogging, etc. on an actively programmed golf course. Wellington Hills County Park will be free and open to the public. There will be fees collected when renting sports fields for league practices and games or renting a picnic shelter for a private gathering but the vast majority of the time the park is open and available daily.

Snohomish County is honoring our commitments made to the public as part of the 2005 Brightwater Mitigation Agreement and has engaged in extensive community outreach to guarantee the development of truly amazing public park asset that will be cherished now and for generations to come. Great parks spaces make for great communities.

Special thanks to all of the Ad Hoc Committee members and citizens who have participated in the public process. Your time, energy and input are greatly appreciated and valued.

Tom Teigen, Director
Snohomish County Park and Recreation Department